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News

For Immediate Release

October 28, 2005

Deadline for Landowners to Apply for Habitat Improvement Funding Extended

*Colchester, VT.....*The deadline for Vermont landowners to enter into a cost share agreement with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service for funding wildlife habitat improvement (WHIP) practices has been extended. Sign-ups are allowed on a continuous basis but applications must be received in the local field office by December 2, 2005 to be considered for this year's funding.

Under the 2002 Farm Bill, the voluntary Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) encourages creation of quality habitats that support wildlife populations of national, state and local significance. NRCS, in coordination with Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department (VTFWD), provides technical assistance and up to 75% of the cost of wildlife habitat improvement practices for restoration and management of important fish and wildlife habitats.

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These habitats include riparian or river corridors, wetlands, grasslands, early successional (brushy areas or young woodlands) and old field habitat, rare and sensitive species habitat, and other rare and significant Vermont habitats.

Landowners in certain areas are eligible for 100% of the cost to restore or manage essential habitats targeted by the WHIP program. Essential habitats include clay plain forest in the Champlain Valley, young woodlands in southern Vermont and deer wintering areas in the Northeast Kingdom.

Applicants will be ranked to compete for limited funding based upon habitat quality and quantity restored. NRCS and VTFWD will work with the participant to develop a wildlife habitat plan which provides the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. The agreements are usually five to ten years in duration, depending upon the practices to be implemented.

For more information contact your local NRCS field office located at the nearest USDA Service Center. NRCS is listed in the phone book under United States Government – Agriculture Department. Also, WHIP information is available on the web at www.vt.nrcs.usda.gov.

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